

REMARKS

The application has been amended and is believed to be in condition for allowance.

The Abstract has been amended to remove the term "comprises". The Abstract provided in the preliminary amendment did not refer to Figure 4.

The specification has been amended to add section headings.

Claims 1 and 3 were amended to remove the word "it".

The recitations of claim 3 have been brought into claim 1, claim 3 being cancelled.

Withdrawal of the pending formal objections/rejection is therefore solicited.

Claims 1, 2, 4-6 were rejected as anticipated by SCHROTER 6,131,950 and claims 3 and 7 were rejected in further view of LANG et al. 5,536,043.

Amended claim 1 is not obvious over these two references as LANG does not disclose that for which it was offered. Therefore, the combination of these references do not teach the features of the invention as recited by thus-amended claim 1.

LANG does not disclose a sheath with an open second end fixed to the load-spreading plate but instead discloses a conventional inflatable bag with a second end closed by a bottom.

See column 4, lines 28-30 which make clear that an end of the airbag 26 "engages the forward facing wall 44 of the near booster panel 28". This engagement cannot be achieved through an open second end and this second end is necessarily closed by a bottom.

This is confirmed by lines 40-43 which further state that the pressure acts on the back of the panel 28 from the inflating airbag 26, which necessarily means that the pressure acts on the panel through the bottom of the airbag 26.

Further, lines 59-65 state that the second end of the tether 50 is attached to the forward facing side of the panel 28 by a ring which is positioned internally of the airbag. This necessarily means that the second end of the airbag 26 is closed and is constituted by a bottom.

Last, lines 1-3 of column 5 give to the airbag the alternative name of bladder from which it can be understood that the second end is closed by a bottom.

In view of the above, it is clear that LANG only discloses a conventional airbag and fails to disclose all the features of independent claim 1.. Further, there is no teaching or suggestion that a sheath with an open second end could be used and what could be the benefit thereof.

Reconsideration and allowance of claim 1 are therefore respectfully requested.

The dependent claims are allowable at least for depending from an allowable claim. Allowance of these claims is

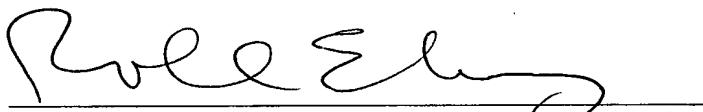
also solicited.

Should there be any matters that need to be resolved in the present application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 25-0120 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. § 1.16 or under 37 C.F.R. § 1.17.

Respectfully submitted,

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APPENDIX:

The Appendix includes the following item:

- amended Abstract of the Disclosure